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# BULLETIN

OF

## THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

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JANUARY, 1907

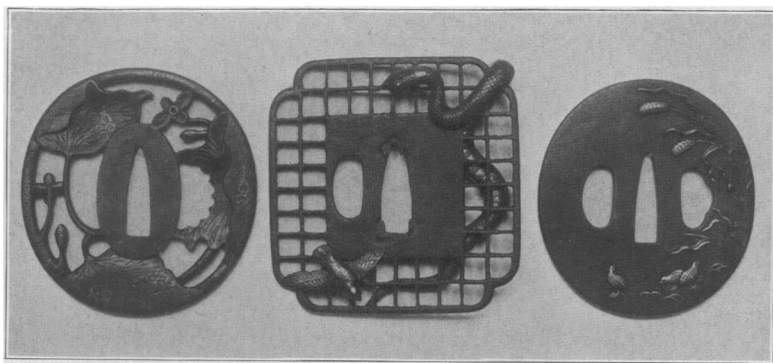
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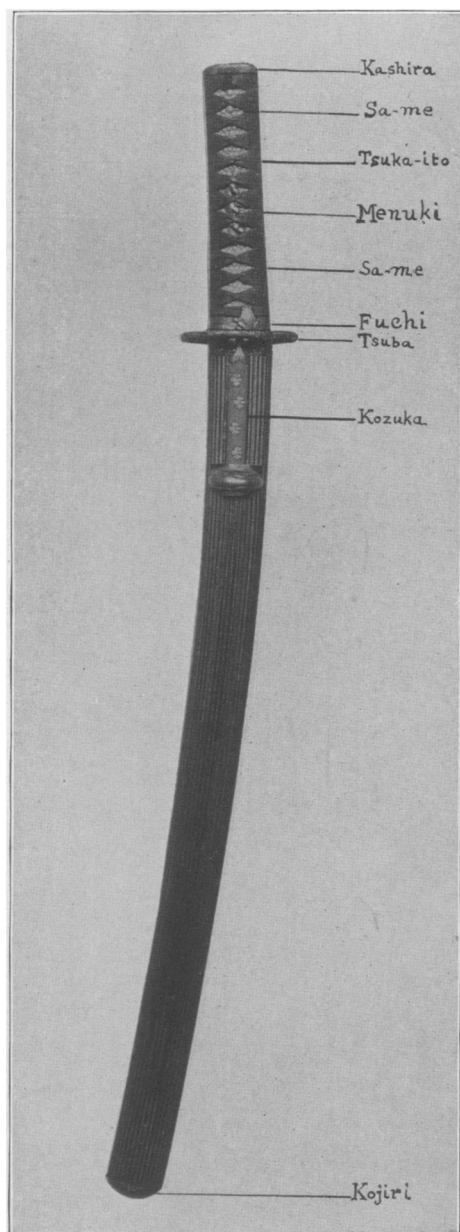
### JAPANESE SWORDS AND SWORD FURNITURE

A remarkable collection of Japanese swords, fire arms, spear points and sword furniture, owned by Edmund G. Hamersly, Esq., of Philadelphia, has recently been arranged in seven cases in the North Corridor, with the kind assistance of Mr. Cornelius Stevenson, Honorary Curator of the Department of Arms and Armor. The very full series of *kashiras*, *fuchis*, *menukis*, *kozukas*, and *tsubas* are of particular interest, representing as they do the highest skill of the Oriental chaser and worker in metals. The swords and daggers, numbering 83 examples, include a great variety of styles in various sizes, and many fine blades beautifully etched, engraved, grooved, and pierced. On the scabbards and hilts are found the most elaborate ornamentation.



EXAMPLES OF TSUBAS, OR SWORD GUARDS

The accompanying illustration shows the positions of the various parts of the Japanese sword. The hilt, or handle, is frequently covered with the skin of the shark or ray fish, with a rough white surface composed of thickly set nodules, known as *sa-me*. Over this is wound a network of braid called *tsuka-ito*, showing the *sa-me* and the *menuki* through the diamond-shaped open-



JAPANESE SWORD  
Showing the Different Parts

ings. At the butt of the hilt is the metal cap or pommel, known as the *kashira*, which is generally decorated with chased, carved, inlaid, or applied designs of various metals and alloys. The collection contains 370 examples of *kashiras*, many of them covered with the most minute and elaborate devices, in gold, silver, steel, bronze, and enamel.

The *kojiri* is the ferule at the lower end of the scabbard which is usually decorated in keeping with the other mountings. The *fuchi* is the ring above the guard, into which the base of the handle fits. There are 370 *fuchis* in the collection, each one elaborately embellished and no two exactly alike. Each *fuchi* is accompanied by a *kashira* of similar pattern.

But it is in the *menukis*, or little metal mounts, which are placed on each side of the handle of the sword, beneath the braid to cover the rivets, and frequently on the scabbard, that we find the greatest variety of design. There are about 750 in the collection. They are made in the forms of almost everything, natural or artificial, known to the Japanese metal worker. Among them we find representations in miniature of animals, birds, fruits, vegetables, fishes, dragons, serpents, shells, masks, vases, groups of men and women, and an infinity of objects, natural, grotesque, and imaginary. The handles of the *kozukas*, the little knives or daggers, which are inserted in the sides of the scabbards of the small swords, are also well represented. The larger surface of the *kozuka* hilt furnished the artist greater scope for the exercise of his exquisite skill. The sword guards, or *tsubas*, numbering over 500 examples, constitute the strongest, and most interesting feature of the collection. Gathered

together in Japan many years ago, they form an exhibit which it would be impossible to duplicate at the present time. The earliest examples in wrought iron, with little or no ornamentation, date back more than four centuries. Many of the older specimens are exceedingly elegant, being executed in openwork designs of flowers, fans, fruits, and other objects, and in some of them the metal remaining is but a small proportion of that which has been cut away. Some are executed in bronze, others in copper, brass ("shinchu"), steel, and many of the more recent are made of "shakudo," a highly valued and beautiful black metal composed of an alloy of copper and gold, on which the applied or inlaid gold ornaments show to the best advantage. Other alloys used in these furnishings are "shibu-ichi," copper combined with silver; "koban-kin," formed of gold and silver, and numerous combinations of copper with other metals. The styles of decoration represent every variety of work known to the Japanese metal workers, such as carving, inlaying, incrusting, chasing, the application of reliefs in gold, silver, steel, iron, and enamel. Several are carved in imitation of the graining of weather-worn wood, or treated with acid to represent the texture of leather. Many of the best examples are inscribed with the names of the makers. Among the swords are fine examples of the *tachi*, hung from the girdle; the *wakizashi*, a short sword worn in the belt, and the *chisa-katana*, of medium length, worn with the court dress, a few long curved swords, and a large two-edged variety known as the *amagoi ken* or "praying for rain" sword, with *tokko* handle, for temple use.

The scabbards (*skia*) are exceedingly varied in ornamentation, many of them being lacquered in different colors, others carved, inlaid, enameled, or covered with the skin of the shark or ray fish, ground down and lacquered.

From this superb collection of *tsubas* we have selected, almost at random, for illustration, examples in several distinct styles. The first is an iron guard with leaf design in openwork. The central piece represents a window lattice with serpent, while the one at the right illustrates the application of gold figures to "shakudo."

The collection of spear heads, consisting of 170 specimens, occupies an entire large case at the eastern end of the North Corridor. They represent the highest skill of the Japanese armorer. Many examples are elaborately chased, engraved, and inscribed. Some are pierced in patterns of hawthorn blossoms, inscriptions, dragons, and animals. They vary in size from the diminutive arrow point to the formidable halbard with several outspreading points. The forms are infinitely varied. There are examples in the shapes of crescents, hearts, crosses, curved swords, daggers, and tridents. All of them are fashioned from the finest steel, which has been sharpened to a razor-like edge.

Mr. Hamersly has also placed on exhibition a collection of Japanese ivory and wood carvings, including a large series of *netsukes*, or ornaments used to suspend the tobacco pouch from the *obi*, or belt, which, in point of variety and workmanship, is probably not equaled by any other similar collection in this country. They have been arranged in two cases in the southeast corner of the East Gallery.